



CULTURAL LIFE

ISRAEL 1954

The memory of ancient greatness merges with forward-looking aspirations in one of the youngest of States today; the influence of religious tradition mingles with expressions of modern social and cultural society in Israel today. Jews who gained their livelihood from trade and commerce become laborers on the land; immigrants from backward Middle Eastern countries face problems of integration into 20th century industrial life. On the soil of Israel, which bears abundant traces of a distant past, advanced techniques are utilized to build the life of the future; men and women from Eastern and Central Europe, Yemen, Iraq and Morocco, and the native-born Sabras, who know no other landscape than that of Israel, must create together their common culture. The soil and the climate, characterized on one hand by regularity of seasons, and on the other by contrasts of light, temperature, and landscape, come together in a stirring challenge to individual and to community alike.

The Hebrew Language

The most important single consolidating force in Israel is the language, based on the Hebrew of the Bible and the Talmud, re-fashioned to meet the requirements of a modern state. A language of books, ceremonial and scholarship is being re-forged as the living language of a living people.

Perhaps the most vital influence in this process is that of the children, the true creators of colloquial Hebrew. For the great majority who must master Hebrew as adults, special classes are

conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor). Press and radio assist in the development of the language, and perhaps the period of compulsory army service plays the most vigorous part in the cultural absorption of teen-age immigrants.

A guiding, regulating and restraining influence is provided by the Academy of the Hebrew Language. The Academy consists of 15 life members. These appoint two new members each year, up to a total of 23. The decisions of the Academy in regard to grammar, spelling, and terminology are regularly published in the Official Gazette, and are binding on educational and scientific institutions, as well as on all Government offices and publications. The Academy was established by law in 1953. It took over the functions of the Hebrew Language Committee which for over sixty years was instrumental in the revival of Hebrew.

Literature

Israel's literature derives mainly from two sources: the Hebrew literature of the National Revival, centered in Eastern Europe; and the background and actual events of the Jewish Return to the Land of Israel as well as the great adventure of the Ingathering of the Exiles.

The majority of Israel's elder writers settled there as adults. Their subjects include recollections of the Diaspora and impressions of the transition and acclimatization to their new environment. Among the outstanding authors are Shmuel Yosef Agnon (born 1888), whose unique prose style draws on all resources of Jewish literature and folklore for the treatment of Chassidic motifs and the portrayal of contemporary life in Israel; Gershon Schofmann (born 1880), master of the short story and profound psychologist; Dvora Baron (born 1877), whose short stories are realistic studies of character and environment; Yehuda Burla (born 1886), member of the Sephardi Community, who interprets the life and outlook of Oriental Jews; and Haim Hazaz (born 1897), whose finest work portrays the Yemenite Jew.

Yitzhak Shenhar (Shenberg) (born 1905) links the older generation and Israel's younger writers whose works possess the immediacy and directness of personal diaries, a vivid newspaper report or a letter from the front. Most of them were deeply affected by the War of Liberation. Writers like Yigal Mossinson (born 1917),

and Moshe Shamir (born 1921) paint Israel in bold, almost melodramatic colors, while S. Yizhar (born 1918) expresses the moral dilemmas of the man of feeling and intellect compelled to inflict suffering in his fight for freedom.

Modern Hebrew poetry reflects these tendencies and problems in more concentrated form. Of the older generation, Yaakov Kahan (born 1881), Avigdor Hameiri (born 1886) and David Shimoni (Shimonovitz) (born 1886) still write. Between these and younger poets are Uri Zvi Greenberg (born 1894), whose vision of national grandeur arises out of revolt against the Jewish tragedy; Avraham Shlonski (born 1900), whose stylistic and linguistic innovations have exercised a profound influence on almost all the younger writers; Sh. Shalom (born 1905), who has written deeply philosophic, lyrical and reflective poetry, and Natan Alterman (born 1900), better known for his satirical, topical verse than for his equally important serious poetry.

Numerous younger poets represent a wide variety of style, subject and point of view. Their poems are published not only in the many literary journals, but also in literary supplements which the daily press publishes each weekend.

Publishing

The volume of publishing in Israel is disproportionate to the size of the population. Israel publishers issued 977 Hebrew books of all kinds in 1953, covering fiction and school textbooks, philosophy and poetry, science and history, original writings and translations. Ordinary editions amount to some 2,000 copies, a figure which bears comparison with corresponding figures in larger countries, though Israel best-sellers cannot hope for the enormous sales achieved abroad.

Of the 1953 total, 205 were fiction—including drama and poetry (70 being originals and 135 translations of both classics and modern writers); 108 (49 originals and 59 translations) for children and young people; 63 books (of which only two were translations) dealt with Jewish scholarship; 20 books (one translation) on the history of the Land of Israel. 19 works were devoted to general history and 11 to Jewish history.

The Bible in Hebrew is issued by several publishing houses, in complete editions, as well as in separate books for school use, both with and without commentaries. A special event was the publication by the Magnes Press of the Hebrew University of the first Israel

edition of the Bible in a text completely revised by a modern Jewish scholar in Israel, the late Professor M.D.U. Cassuto. Prayer-books and books on religious subjects are produced in large numbers in various editions, plus a wide variety of books on religious subjects.

A comprehensive 20-volume Hebrew Encyclopedia, covering all fields of human knowledge, with particular emphasis on Jewish affairs and Israel, is in the course of publication and already boasts of over forty thousand subscribers.

The Rav Kook Institute publishes a Talmudic Encyclopedia; a second "General Encyclopedia" on a smaller scale is also being published. An important event in 1953 was the publication of a voluminous Hebrew dictionary of "medical and scientific terminology."

A wide selection from world literature, past and present, already exists in translation and is being added to each year.

Libraries

Reading taste on the whole is discriminate, and a healthy and independent sense of criticism can be detected in the literary public. It knows what it wants and is quick to react to a shoddy translation. To serve the need of this voracious reading public, lending libraries have been set up throughout the country. These libraries now contain about 1,200,000 books. "Book Mobiles" have been organized to cater to immigrants and settlers living in distant, not easily accessible areas. A central library for the blind, the only one of its type in Israel, was set up in Natanya.

The most extensive collections of books in Israel are to be found in the Knesset (Parliament) Library, the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, the Municipal Library of Tel Aviv, and the nation-wide library chain of the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor). For more specific fields, reference may be made to the Art Library of the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, the Botanical Library of Bet Gordon in Degania, the Bet Sturman Library of Archaeology and Natural Sciences at Ein Harod, and the Index Library of the Scientific Research Council of Israel.

The United States Information Service libraries in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and the British Council library in Tel Aviv enjoy a great popularity among the English-reading public.



Scene from a recent presentation by the Chamber Theatre

The Theatre

Israel theatre consists of a number of self-supporting theatrical companies, with a more or less permanent staff of actors and directors, occasionally hiring directors from abroad. There are three dramatic companies: Habimah, Ohel and the Chamber Theatre; one company, the Matate, which specializes in comedy and satire; the Israel National Opera Company; and two companies for revues and operettas: Li La Lo and Do Re Mi.

All these are based in Tel Aviv, but perform frequently in towns and villages throughout the country. Each company presents an average of 8 new productions a year and almost a million tickets are sold each season.

Plays are frequently given in Yiddish and other languages by ad hoc companies, and there are many amateur groups.

The theatre receives little governmental or municipal assistance, and relies for its support on the public, which is, relatively, the largest mass audience in the world.

Most of the companies are owned and managed by the actors operating as a cooperative, and up to recent times all decisions on repertoire, casting, etc. were taken collectively. Now, however, most are managed by directorates elected annually by the entire company and granted freedom of action immediately thereafter.

The pioneer company, Habimah, formed in 1918 and permanently resident in Palestine since 1925, based its methods on the principles of Stanislavsky and Wachtongoff. The other companies were also influenced by these traditions. The basic repertoire of the Israel theatre was taken from European drama, and plays on Jewish themes either dealt with historical subjects or portrayed Jewish life in the Diaspora.

The increase in the proportion of native-born Israelis led to lusty demands for plays by native workers, portraying the life and problems of the country in modern terms or dealing with historical and biblical subjects from an Israel point of view. Plays by Israel authors began to occupy a more prominent place in the repertoire, and dramatists like Ashman, Shaham, Shamir, Mossinson and Megged made notable contributions. Young producers and actors, including those trained in Israel and new immigrants, began to make their influence felt, and visiting directors from Western Europe and America contributed new methods and ideas. The theatres take the initiative in encouraging promising local dramatists to produce plays meeting constant public demand. Plays from the international repertoire, however, both classical and modern, still constitute about 80% of the productions staged, and there is hardly a dramatist of note whose works have not been represented on Israel stages.

Style in production and speech presents a difficult problem as a result of the variegated national origins of players and audiences alike.

Frequency of new productions and constant performance of old productions require backbreaking work from the Israel actor who does not enjoy the facilities for perfecting individual roles afforded by the long runs customary abroad. In many cases, however, high standards have been attained, and the names of such performers as Hannah Rovina, Joshua Bertonov, Aharon Meskin and Shimon Finkel of Habimah, Hanna Meron, Orna Porat and Yosef Yadin of the Chamber Theatre and Meir Margalit of Ohel are household names. The establishment of an Israel dramatic academy is currently being discussed.

The lack of suitable theatrical premises is another trial. Habi-mah alone has its own theatre in Tel Aviv, while the other companies perform in hired halls. In most centres outside Tel Aviv, plays are performed on cinema stages, far from satisfactory. Habi-mah and the Chamber Theatre plan to equip premises to be used for experimental productions, and the Haifa Municipality will build a special theatre in cooperation with the Chamber Theatre. Large open-air amphitheatres, built in many parts of the country on the initiative of cooperative settlements, provide central theatres in rural areas.

In order to introduce theatre to new immigrant settlers, the General Federation of Labor has set up an unique organization called "Telem" which arranges performances in outlying districts. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Jewish Agency cooperate in the financing and administration of this extraordinary enterprise.

Amateur theatrical groups perform in towns and cities, and are particularly developed within the communal settlements, which boast a total of more than 90 such groups.

Lectures on theatrical subjects are well attended, and the Habi-mah Youth Circle holds regular meetings. Theatre criticism occupies a prominent place in the daily press, and often gives rise to lively public discussions.

Music

For two thousand years, music among the Jewish people was intimately bound up with religious observance in synagogue and home, and even folksongs are a comparatively new development. In Israel today, all types of music are represented, performed by symphony orchestras and chamber groups, school ensembles and dance bands. Israel music is influenced, not only by international trends, but by the different styles and traditions of the Western and Eastern Jewish communities. The Ethnological Institute for Jewish Music, attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture, systematically records songs and melodies, collects and studies music brought to Israel by the Oriental communities and East European Jewry.

Israel is fortunate in the wealth of musical talent and boundless enthusiasm of its population for good music. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra must satisfy demands of almost 15,000 regular subscribers, and tickets for its concerts are at a premium.



Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

Ever since Arturo Toscanini conducted its first concert in 1936, the list of guest artists and composers reads like a Who's Who of the musical world. Among the conductors: Serge Koussevitzky, Sir Malcom Sargent, Pierre Monteux, Bernadino Molinari, Herman Scherchen, Leonard Bernstein, Charles Munch, Paul Parray and Walter Susskind; among the performing artists: Huberman, Jasha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin, Misha Elman, Isaac Stern, Zino Francescatti, Arthur Rubinstein, Claudio Arrau, Ida Hendel, Jennie Tourel and many others including the best of Israel's own artists. The concert tour of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in America during the first months of 1951 covered 40 cities in the United States and Canada and did much to promote cultural relations between Israel and these countries. In 1954, for the first time in its 18 years of existence, the Orchestra is recording some of its classical and Israel repertoire.

Aside from the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, regular performances are given by the Kol Yisrael (Israel Broadcasting Ser-

vice) Orchestra in Jerusalem and the Haifa Orchestra. Numerous chamber music and solo recitals draw capacity audiences.

Composers of the older generation faced the urgent problems of cultural transplantation, but the younger composers are concerned mainly with present and future problems. The principal concern of the younger men and women is the amalgamation of an occidental musical tradition with an oriental environment, and the assimilation of the vocal and melodic line derived from Hebrew rhythms. Israel music may yet provide an important and exciting bridge between the music of East and West.

The main schools of composition are: the Eastern European Jewish School, based mainly on the folk music of Eastern European Jewry; the Eastern Mediterranean School, which attempts to incorporate an oriental-pastoral-Mediterranean spirit; the Central European School, whose idiom is decidedly Western in style and expression even when the subjects are Jewish; and the younger composers, feeling their way towards eventual synthesis, perhaps even the foundation of a new Israel music.

Principal composers in the Eastern European School are: Yoa-chim Stutchevsky, Gabriel Grad, Yitzhak Edel, Aviasaf Bernstein (in his early works) and Joseph Kaminsky. Among the principal composers of the Central European School are: Erich Walter Sternberg, Joseph Tal, a younger composer, Karel Salomon, who has changed in style with his gradual absorption of oriental material, Hanoch Jacobi, and Abraham Daus.

Acknowledged head of the Eastern-Mediterranean group is Paul Ben-Haim, and another important member of this school is Oedon Partos, whose music is strongly influenced by oriental chant. Others of this school are Alexander Uri Boscovitch and Menachem Avidom.

In addition to his serious music which includes the first Israel opera "Dan, the Watchman," Marc Lavri is well known for his popular songs. Perhaps one of the best known Kibbutz composers is Yehuda Sharett. Yedidia Admon-Gorohov, Moshe Byck and Mat-tiahu Schelem-Weiner are other prominent composers.

Many of the problems of development found in the work of the older generation are mirrored in that of younger musicians: modal melody derived from early Christian chants based on ancient Hebrew prototypes, Oriental folk-melody and rhythm, neo-classical treatment of popular material, pastoral romanticism, liturgical elements, Eastern-European echoes, experimentation in the twelve-tone idiom which has close affinity with Oriental styles—all these, and many

more, meet side by side. But however strong the influence of the elders and however obvious the link with the West, there is enough in the music of Israel's younger composers to point to a characteristic and new style and a great potential for original development.

The growing interest of the world in Israel's music is evidenced by the fact that Israel artists and compositions were heard in such diverse centers as Salzburg, Tanglewood, New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Zurich, Stockholm and Copenhagen. The 28th International Festival of Modern Music will be held for the first time in Israel at the end of May, 1954.

A survey of the musical scene in present-day Israel is not complete without recording the great role music is playing in the agricultural settlements. Most of them have either a choral or an instrumental group of their own, and folk-dancing is a favorite pastime. The settlements also have a 40-piece symphony orchestra of their own. The traditional holidays are celebrated with large-scale musical performances, for which very often the settlements' own composers—or Israel composers from the towns—contribute new works. The musical festival celebrations will surely be an important factor in the future of musical forms in Israel. The annual festival at Ein Gev during Passover may be compared to the Tanglewood music festival in the United States.

A new link between the Jewish people in the Diaspora and in Israel was forged by the "Zimriah" Song Festival held for the first time in Israel during the summer of 1952. About 740 persons came from all parts of the world to take part in this first festival of song. They came from ten different lands to lay the foundations of a new tradition: pilgrimage to Israel in song. The main aims of the festival were to encourage musical compositions and popularize Hebrew song, strengthen the bond between Jewish youth in the Diaspora and in Israel, and contribute to the development of the State of Israel as a cultural center for the entire Jewish people.

Dance

Some of Israel's most original artistic creations have been achieved in the field of the dance, which is one of the most popular expressions of the country's creative genius. This is best illustrated in the development of the folk dance, its stylization and recreation of ancient dances together with the spirit of the pioneer which



Folk-dancing at a Kibbutz celebration

dominates Israel. This is true of the "hora," the most popular dance in Israel, which is foremost in the creation of a communal spirit, as well as of many other dances in the country, both original and adapted from other lands. One of the leaders in the development of the folk dance is Gurit Kadmon (Gertrud Kaufman), and its popularity is attested to at the three yearly Dalia Dance Festivals in the hills of Ephraim, attended by over 60,000 spectators in a natural amphitheatre. The formation of the Yemenite "Inbal" Dance Group, which aims at the preservation of Yemenite traditions is yet another expression of this mood.

Ballet is represented by several schools, led by well-known performers, including Rina Nikova, Gertrude Krauss and Else Dublon. The ballet of Rina Nikova specializes in rhythmic interpretation of biblical themes. Several ballet groups have recently merged to form the Israel Ballet Theatre, others attempt choral and folk-dancing combinations.

Art

Creative art in Israel is not characterized only by the continuation of the old, influenced by a new environment, but rather by radical change and earnest search for innovation and independence. Israel art reflects the national, social and cultural evolution involved in the revival of the ancient homeland, and the wholly new way of life which is taking shape in the country. At the same time it mirrors the creative forces of art and cultural life of the world outside.

The teachers of the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem (founded 1906), who gave Israel's first generation of artists their grounding, originated from West European Academies, and based their work on 19th century romantic orientalism. The paintings of that period were meant to give an "Israel" effect by means of subject matter, but their color, composition, etc., were derived from Europe.

Among the younger artists who brought new scope to Israel painting were Reuven Rubin, Nahum Guttman, Pinhas Litvinowsky and Joseph Zaritzky. Around these congregated wider circles of younger artists, and the center of gravity passed from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. Soon the first painters appeared in the Kibbutzim, led by Haim Aptekar-Atar, who managed to create a distinguished collection in Kibbutz Ein Harod.

During the thirties, and more especially with the onslaught of immigration from Germany, a number of talented and experienced newcomers arrived. The outstanding representative was Mordechai Ardon-Bronstein; another was Jacob Steinhardt, particularly distinguished for his wood-cuts and etchings. At that time, a new tendency developed, characterized by an attempt to come to grips with the characteristic special light and color problems of Israel, and to catch up with the tremendous changes taking place abroad, particularly in France.

Various groups and trends emerged in Israel painting. There were those who tried to reproduce the beauties of the landscape and the character of the people in more or less naturalistic fashion. To this group belong such painters as Guttman, Levanon and the late Menachem Shemi (Schmidt). Others, like Zaritzky, Mokady and Rubin tried to assimilate the constructive character of modern art and concentrated on purely plastic values. Outstanding among them was Marcel Jancu, under whose leadership together with that of Zaritzky, the "New Horizons" group came into being. There is no ideological unity among members of this group, who are held together by a mutual love of innovation and progress.



Life-class at the Bezalel School of Art, Jerusalem

After the War of Liberation, an increasing number of art exhibitions was held, vividly demonstrating the progress made by Israel painting of various schools. Israel painters proved that they were able to express the character of the landscape, reflected in the individual experience of the artist. At the same time, others evolving a new ideal of Israel painting revealed character not by external images but in the use of shape and color.

A number of fine craftsmen work in black and white drawings, among them Navon, Krakauer and Anna Ticho.

Israel artists participate in exhibitions abroad, and have been seen in Paris, London, and New York, as well as at international shows at Venice and Sao Paulo.

Monumental sculpture has advanced slowly except in the kibbutzim, where several important works by Ze'ev Ben Zvi, Natan Rappaport, Batya Lishansky and others have been erected. In other fields of sculpture, progress is shown in the works of Ben Zvi, Elul Kosso, Yechiel Shemi and others.

Arts and Crafts

Considerable artistic creativity has been shown in the development of arts and crafts in Israel. Much talent has been brought into the country by oriental Jewish communities, and the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts has been the main center for the creation of a new Israel style, modern and yet with roots in the past. The main types of handicraft are silver and cooper works, ceramics, handweaving and embroidery, woodworks, carpets and rugs. All these objects of art enjoy a great popularity at home, attract tourists and reach widening markets abroad.

Movie Industry

The film industry in Israel is in its infancy. A number of shorts as well as full-length features have already been produced, some winning awards at International Film Festivals. Most of these are documentaries, and two companies produce newsreels.

So far two major Hollywood productions, "The Juggler" and "Salome," were partly filmed in Israel.

Three companies manufacture phonograph records of Israel and Jewish music.

Museums, Art Galleries & Exhibitions

Israel's oldest museum is the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, named after the biblical craftsman, and founded in 1906 by Professor Boris Schatz. It owns a fine collection of paintings, and is the main deposit of Jewish art treasures. The Bezalel Museum brings to the public special exhibitions 4 to 6 times a year, and organizes travelling exhibits throughout the country. Other museums include the Tel Aviv Museum, founded in 1926, the Haaretz Museum of Archaeology in Tel Aviv, the Museum of Antiquities in Jerusalem, the Archaeological Museum in Tel Aviv, the Mishkan Leomanut Art Museum in Ein Harod as well as the Sturman Collection of Natural Sciences there.

There are numerous art galleries in Jerusalem, the most prominent being the Artists' Pavillion of the Jerusalem Artist Association, in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and smaller collections in other towns, villages and settlements.

The latest addition to these is the Permanent Israel Pavillion on the grounds of the National Convention Center in Jerusalem, which was part of the International Conquest of the Desert Exhibition in September and October, 1953, and which attracted more than 600,000 visitors from home and abroad.

The Daily Press, Periodicals

Israelis are among the most voracious newspaper readers in the world. Every 1,000 inhabitants buy 235 copies of daily papers every day, and most Israelis read two newspapers a day, both a morning and an afternoon paper.

The press is supplied by both local and foreign news services. Owing to a shortage of newsprint, Israel papers average only 4 pages on weekdays and 8-10 on Fridays. But the press manages to cover world news and keep the public well informed on all current issues, both domestic and foreign. No papers appear on the Sabbath.

As in many European countries, most Israel newspapers are aligned in varying degrees with specific political parties and groups, although a few are editorially independent. The press is free and Israel's courts guard this freedom zealously.

There are, at present, 23 daily newspapers, most of them published in Tel Aviv, the remainder in Jerusalem, but all with a country-wide circulation. Twenty of these are morning papers, 3 are afternoon papers. Fifteen of the dailies appear in Hebrew, the others in Arabic (1), English (1), French (1), German (2), Hungarian (1) and Bulgarian (2). Most of the foreign-language newspapers serve the needs of newcomers who have not yet acquired a sufficient working knowledge of Hebrew. However, most newspapers, foreign language as well as Hebrew, set aside a "Hebrew Column for Beginners" to enable new immigrants to read the day's news in simple and vocalized Hebrew. One morning paper (Omer), is written in elementary Hebrew to keep new immigrants abreast of the news.

Other journals include 20 newspapers which appear more than once a week (3 in Hebrew and 17 in other languages), 96 weeklies (50 in Hebrew, 46 in other languages), 116 monthlies (100 in Hebrew). In all there are 221 periodicals published in Hebrew and 120 in other languages, including illustrated, technical and scientific, literary, art, religious, local and party publications.

Radio

"Kol Israel," the "Voice of Israel," State Broadcasting Service is on the air for seventeen hours a day broadcasting from its Jerusalem studio, with parts of the program transmitted from Tel Aviv. In 1953, a new 50 kw. transmitter on a medium wave length was put into operation, serving the entire country. The new transmitter also made possible the introduction of a "Second Program," a cultural program of special interest to more discriminating listeners.

The main programs transmitted on Kol Israel consist of news, news summaries and commentaries, radio press conferences, instructive programs for adults in the evenings and for young people during daytime, literary programs, dramas and musical programs, both on records and live broadcasts of the Kol Israel Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Opera and theatre groups.

There are 6 regular daily news services in Hebrew, 3 in Arabic, 2 in English and 1 in French. Two hours daily are devoted to Arabic programs.

In the evening, Kol Israel broadcasts programs on a special wave length for new immigrants. There are daily programs in Yiddish, French and Ladino, four times a week in Rumanian and Hungarian, three times a week in Turkish and twice a week in Persian.

The Defense Forces' "Galei Zahal" on the air for 3½ hours daily broadcasts a lighter program for the armed forces.

Kol Zion Lagola (The Voice of Zion to the Diaspora) broadcasts daily on short wave programs in Hebrew, Yiddish, English and French, and is beamed to Europe, North Africa and the Americas.

Published by the

ISRAEL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

11 East 70th Street, New York, N. Y.

Washington, D. C.
1621 22nd St.

Chicago
936 N. Michigan Ave.

Los Angeles
208 W. 8th St.

Montreal, Canada
1260 University Street

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PRINTED
IN U.S.A.